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Myron Harmon Swenk
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I. ON A NEW SUBSPECIES OF OTTER FROM NEBRASKA¹

BY MYRON HARMON SWENK

Formerly otters were very common along all of our Nebraska streams. In the winter of 1819-20 they were found frequently on the Missouri river and tributary streams near Engineer Cantonment (north of Omaha), as reported by Edwin James, the botanist and geologist of the Major S. H. Long Expedition. At Fort Kearney, Nebraska, on July 5, 1856, W. S. Wood with Lieut. F. T. Bryan's survey party obtained a young female otter which is now Cat. No. 1877 (skin) and 2575 (skull) of the U. S. National Museum. Otters were also extensively and persistently trapped by the early trappers and Indians, and, due to this fact, they became less and less common year by year until their local extirpation along the streams in the more settled portions of the state took place. However, as late as 1880 Aughey stated that the otter occurred "more or less abundantly" on all of the Nebraska rivers.

The last records of their common occurrence in eastern Nebraska are in the nineties. A poorly mounted adult with the skull inaccessible, now in the University Museum, is said to have been taken on the Missouri river in the early nineties, having been sent in and mounted by F. J. Brezee. At about the same time a local trapper secured an otter on Salt Creek at the crossing of the Rock Island and Missouri Pacific tracks near Sprague, about fifteen miles south of Lincoln, and a specimen was taken on the Elkhorn river near West Point, according to Professor L.

¹ Publication No. 4 of the Nebraska State Biological Survey.

Bruner, who further states that in 1891 or 1892 several young otters were killed by a dog in Holt county, but the old otters were not seen. In 1897 I learned of an otter being trapped on the Big Blue river near Beatrice. Reports of otters along the Platte and Republican rivers in central Nebraska were received subsequent to its practical disappearance from the eastern counties.

Since about 1900 the otter has been a rare animal all over the state. In 1906 the furriers regarded the animal as nearly extinct in the state, and practically no Nebraska otter skins have been received at the local fur houses for the past twelve or fifteen years. In fact, I have heard of only one otter being taken in the state during that period, and that was along the Middle Loup river in Thomas county.

In 1908² I referred our Nebraska otters to *L. c. sonora* (Rhoads), basing this conclusion on the mounted specimen in the University Museum, because of its large size and pallor, that being the only Nebraska specimen in any collection in the state at that time, and, so far as known to me, the only Nebraska specimen extant except the young female in the U. S. National Museum mentioned above. In 1915³ I repeated this identification. The taking of a fine old male otter with a perfect skull in eastern Nebraska in 1916 reopened the whole question, and a close study has indicated that the Nebraska animal could not be referred to *sonora* because of its short, stout, postorbital processes, nor yet to typical *canadensis* because of its larger body size, paleness and less crowded teeth. I propose, therefore, that the Nebraska otter be regarded as more or less intermediate, subspecifically distinct from both under the name

***Lutra canadensis interior* subsp. nov.**

INTERIOR OTTER

Type.—Lincoln creek, west of Seward, Seward county, Nebraska, June 4, 1916. ♂ old adult. No. 28,728, Collection of University of California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.) George and R. Anderson, collectors. Found dead in the creek. Very fat.

² *A Preliminary Review of the Mammals of Nebraska*, p. 76.

³ *Nebraska Blue Book*, i, p. 854.

Subspecific Characters.—Similar to *L. c. canadensis* Kerr,⁴ of northeastern North America, but slightly paler, distinctly larger, with a proportionately shorter hind foot, proportionately smaller skull and less crowded teeth; also similar to *L. c. lataxina* Cuvier,⁵ of the central Atlantic coast region, but much larger thruout and with the inferior webs of the feet more densely haired; also very close to *L. c. sonora* Rhoads,⁶ of Arizona, but slightly smaller and darker, with a much shorter hind foot, and with shorter, stouter postorbital processes; paler, especially beneath, with more densely haired inferior webs, and differing in many cranial characters from *L. c. vaga* Bangs,⁷ of Florida and the Gulf Coast region; larger and differing in important cranial characters from *L. c. pacifica* Rhoads,⁸ *L. c. periclyzomae* Elliot,⁹ and *L. c. brevipilosus* Grinnell;¹⁰ much larger and with a much stronger and more ridged skull than *L. degener* Bangs.¹¹

Color.—Adult in summer pelage: Above dark reddish brown, between seal brown and vandyke brown or burnt umber, becoming somewhat paler on the neck because of paler tips to many of the hairs; under parts paler, the under side of the head below nostrils, eye and ear, and the under side of the neck below a line between the ear and the base of the fore leg, wood brown so heavily overlaid with long, white hairs as to appear whitish, and, under the ears, white; breast and remainder of under parts Prout's brown, decreasingly overlaid with whitish hairs from breast to belly; legs and feet above concolorous with upper parts, below paler, the inferior web of the feet densely haired.

Measurements of Type ♂.—"Length 53 inches; tail 18 inches" (by collector). Measurements of carefully made-up skin: Length, 1270; tail, 488; hind foot, 120; ear, 16.5 (by author).

The general color of *L. c. interior* is paler than in typical *cana-*

⁴ Linn. An. Kingd., i, p. 173 (1792).

⁵ Dict. des Sci. Nat., p. 242 (1823).

⁶ Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. Hist., iii, pp. 253-256 (1891).

⁷ Proc. Bost. Soc. Nat. Hist., xxviii, p. 224 (1898).

⁸ Trans. Amer. Phil. Soc., xix, pp. 429-431 (1898).

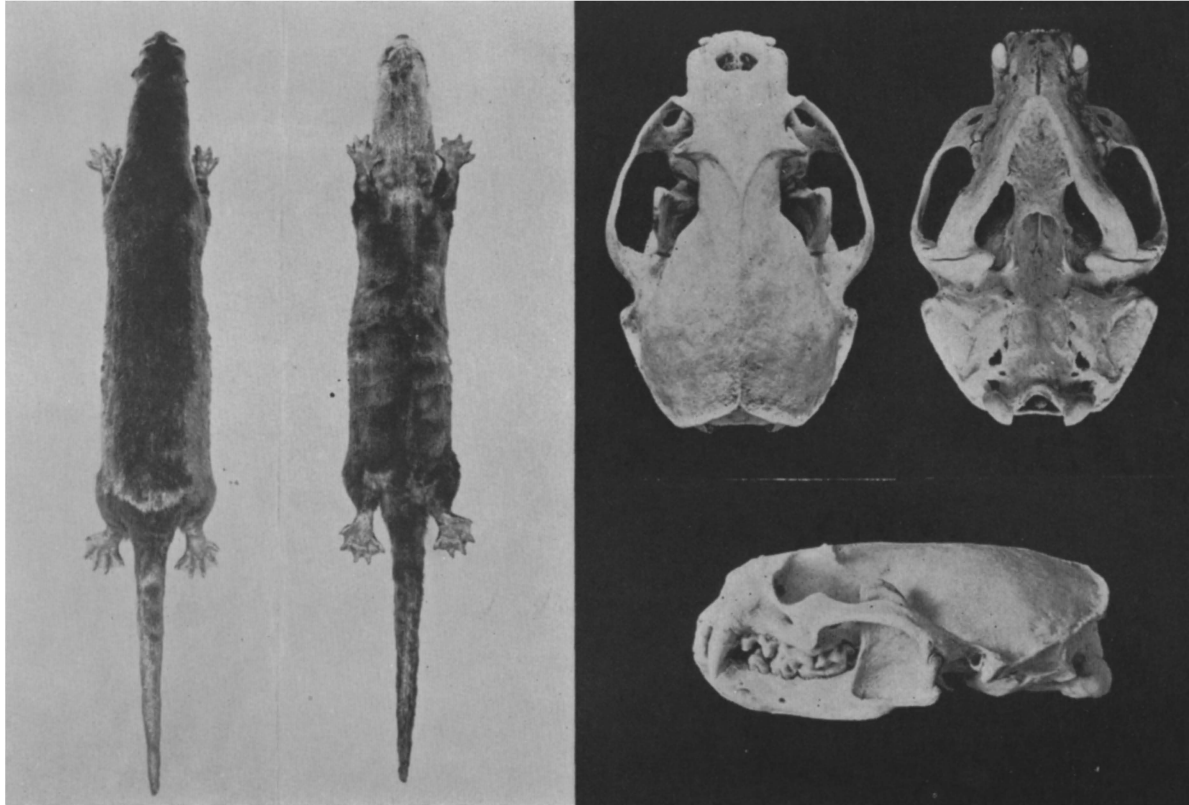
⁹ Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash., xviii, pp. 80-81 (1905).

¹⁰ Univ. California Pubs. Zoology, xii, pp. 306-309 (1914).

¹¹ Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash., xii, p. 35 (1898).

	Total Length	Tail Vertebrae	Hind Foot	Total Length of Skull	Greatest Zygomatic Width	Mastoid Width	Least Interorbital Width	Width Across Post-orbital Processes	Width Across Post-orbital Constriction	Locality of Specimen
<i>L. c. canadensis</i> (E. A. and O. Bangs, 4188 and 4189) . . .	1,168	457	124	112	76	69	26	38	22	Massachusetts
<i>L. c. lataxina</i> (E. A. and O. Bangs, 3537 and H. H. and C. S. Brimley, 453)	1,144	445	..	104	71	62	22	33	22	North Carolina
<i>L. c. interior</i> (M. V. Z. 28728, type)	1,270	488	120	112	74.5	66.5	24	35.7	21.5	Nebraska
<i>L. c. sonora</i> (A. M. N. H. 3712, type) . . .	1,300	472	146	..	..	..	..	..	..	Arizona
<i>L. c. vaga</i> (E. A. and O. Bangs, 4998 and S. N. Rhoads, 1580) . .	1,285	487	130	116	79	76.5	27	39.5	20.5	Florida
<i>L. c. pacifica</i> (S. N. Rhoads 616, type) . .	1,117	419	128	115.5	72.5	69	25	36.5	20	Washington
<i>L. c. peridylzomae</i> (Field Col. Mus. 491, type) . . . . .	..	..	..	122	81	..	..	40	20	British Columbia
<i>L. c. brevipilosus</i> (M. V. Z. 19152 and 20775)	1,158	447	123.5	109.5	75.3	67.1	24.9	..	20	California
<i>L. degener</i> (E. A. and O. Bangs 6965, type)	998	358	115	101	66	60	22	32.5	19.5	Newfoundland

PLATE I.



Lutra canadensis interior ♂.

Type.—Skin one-eleventh natural size; skull nearly one-half natural size.